reductions in certain Soviet weapons that threaten Western Europe. Nothing was said, for example, about the mobile SS-20 missiles based in Soviet Asia, which could be aimed at Europe on short notice. American officials also were unimpressed with Moscow's moratorium on nuclear testing. "We feel that the Soviets have an advantage and for the moment don't need to test," said White House spokesman Larry Speakes. "The United States feels that for our own national security it's important that we do test."

Gorbachev's idea for a freeze on British and French nuclear forces also posed a problem. It would prevent Britain from replacing its old Poseidon submarine-launched missiles with new Trident missiles, and it would block a French program of replacing single-warhead M-20 missiles with six-warhead M-4s. Neither government was likely to accept such restrictions. "Show me some really significant reductions on the Soviet side and the American side, and we will consider building to a lower total than we would have built to," says Col. Jonathan Alford, deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, summing up London's attitude.

Hope for a deal: No one in Washington expected nuclear weapons to be eliminated by the end of the century. "They're cheap, and they work, so they're not going to disappear from the face of the earth," said one American official. The elimination of nuclear weapons also would leave NATO to face the Soviet Union's overwhelming superiority in conventional weapons. But there was hope that a quick, interim agreement on medium-range missiles still might be possible if Star Wars does not become a sticking point and if Moscow can be persuaded to accept some qualitative improvements in British and French missiles. And Gorbachev's proposal suggested that it might be possible to reach early agreements on peripheral arms-control issues, such as chemical warfare.

This week the negotiators in Geneva will continue to probe for common ground. It appears that Gorbachev wants to produce some tangible progress on arms control in time for his second summit with Reagan next summer—or put himself in a position to blame Washington if progress isn't achieved. Before Gorbachev's surprise announcement, administration officials suggested that the president and his party could weather a second summit without an arms accord, because they believed that the Soviets would be the ones to appear intransigent. Gorbachev's expansive proposal changed that calculation. Now more of the pressure for progress is on Washington, just where Gorbachev wanted it to be.

RUSSELL WATSON *with* JOHN WALCOTT *in Washington,* FRED COLEMAN *in Geneva,* DEBBIE SEWARD *in Moscow and bureau reports*

BILL GENTILE FOR NEWSWEEK

New supplies for some loyal allies: *A Sandinista-owned Soviet Mi-24 helicopter*

Moscow's Double Game

A mix of arms offers and Third World adventurism

Soviet foreign policy these days may owe as much to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds," as to Marx and Lenin. Moscow's new arms control proposal is clearly part of a diplomatic offensive designed to improve its worldwide image. But at the same time, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has launched an ambitious though less visible campaign to rearm a host of Third World allies who are fighting U.S.-backed rebel movements or supporting terrorist attacks on the West. While the Kremlin has stepped up support for its clients, the Reagan administration has shown a growing interest in attacking them. The danger is that both sides could be setting the stage for a confrontation that neither expects or wants.

While Libya's Muammar Kaddafi has vowed to back "terrorist and suicide missions," the Soviets have intensified their support for him. Some U.S. and Arab diplomats speculate that Moscow may have had a hand in last week's abortive coup in South Yemen (page 34). In Nicaragua, U.S. analysts believe the Soviets may have reversed an earlier decision and decided to improve the quality of their military shipments to the Sandinistas; in turn, the administration plans to ask Congress for as much as $100 million in military aid for the contras. The Soviets have also stepped up support to the Marxist government in Angola, and now Washington is debating whether to respond by providing covert aid to anti-communist leader Jonas Savimbi. A classified CIA study reports that Gorbachev has sharply increased overt and covert military aid to virtually all the Kremlin's Third World clients, including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Syria and Vietnam.

Gorbachev's objectives may be similar to Ronald Reagan's in 1981. Like the president, Gorbachev took over after a period of weak leadership, economic floundering at home and repeated embarrassments abroad. The succession of ailing Soviet leaders, of setbacks in Syria, Grenada and Afghanistan, and of a new challenge from the Chinese leadership all contributed to a suspicion that what Marxists call "the correlation of forces" had turned against Moscow in the early 1980s. Now Gorbachev may want to reverse that correlation of forces before settling down to serious negotiations about Third World hot spots.

'Low intensity warfare': But while seeking to tweak the American eagle's beak, Gorbachev has been careful to avoid moves that might cause it to unsheath its talons. Instead of challenging the U.S. in areas where it has an advantage—nuclear warfare or full-scale conventional conflict—he has supported paramilitary and terrorist operations that take advantage of America's need to build a democratic consensus and its reluctance to risk a full-scale superpower confrontation. Recently U.S. military analysts have coined a name for the strategy: "low intensity warfare" (LIW).

Last week the administration convened a conference in Washington to discuss how to fight LIW. While differing on specifics, many of the current and former officials and other experts who attended seemed to be trying to build consensus for military action. Secretary of State George Shultz criticized Congress and the European allies for balking at retaliation, and argued that

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America's respect for international law should not prevent it from acting in self-defense. Shultz identified four areas where the administration should focus its efforts: encouraging a national debate about LIW; making full use of nonmilitary weapons such as antiterrorist defenses, criminal laws and economic aid to the Third World; better utilization of intelligence capabilities, including covert action, and resolving as a last resort to use military force, starting with Army and Marine units trained for limited interventions.

For two years Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has publicly taken a more cautious line than Shultz's. Before acting, he has argued, the United States must first perceive a threat to its vital interests, identify clear military objectives, muster domestic support—and be sure it has the will to win. At the LIW conference military authorities still sounded less bellicose than the civilians, but Weinberger seemed to modify his position. He recommended removing legal restriction on U.S. training of foreign police forces, renewing Vietnam-style "nation-building" efforts in the Third World, devoting more time to mobilizing consensus at home and using Special Operations units when appropriate. He also said that "we must be prepared to act alone."

In a number of cases Gorbachev has moved to dampen tensions in the Third World: he has hinted at a possible withdrawal agreement in Afghanistan, tried to encourage a Middle East peace conference and pressured Syrian President Hafez Assad to arrange the release of the TWA hijack victims last June. But Gorbachev's actions elsewhere now stand to heighten tensions. The danger is that if Gorbachev's efforts to reassert Soviet power are rubbed energetically enough against the Reagan Doctrine, the friction could start a fire. While both sides have avoided any confrontation, a dangerous question remains: can the superpowers escalate out-of-the-way conflicts without slipping into larger and far more dangerous showdowns?

JOHN WALCOTT *with* KIM WILLENSON *in Washington*

Kaddafi's 'Friend' in the White House

Muammar Kaddafi is getting some unexpected—and unintended—help from Ronald Reagan. Three weeks ago Libyans were using Kaddafi's "Peoples' Committee" meetings to voice their dissatisfaction with chronic shortages of food and basic commodities. But Reagan's threats of military action and the imposition of economic sanctions have united the country behind its leader, and Kaddafi is making full use of this reverse leverage. Speaking last week on the birthday of the late Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kaddafi defied Reagan yet again by offering to train and equip Arab terrorists on Libyan soil. "This has been a formidable victory for Kaddafi. He's got the Arab world behind him and he's a hero at home," said one Western diplomat in Tripoli. "He's been given a new lease on life."

Empty shelves: Until the U.S. Sixth Fleet stationed itself off Libya's shores, Kaddafi faced perhaps the most difficult period of his rule. Oil income has plummeted, and he has compensated by cutting back on imports, down 19.4 percent last year. A walk through one of Tripoli's vast supermarkets reveals Kaddafi's dilemma. Behind the gleaming cash registers are rows of empty shelves. Only a few nonperishables such as tomato paste and tea can be found in abundance. Three weeks ago Libyan shoppers rioted over a shipment of Nicaraguan bananas sitting in a Libyan port. Two women were trampled to death during a similar riot two months ago.

To counter growing domestic opposition, Kaddafi has relied increasingly on the "Revolutionary Committees"—a network of ideological zealots whose task is to maintain the momentum of the "revolution." In practice, this means close surveillance both of the military, through the infiltration of barracks, and of the civilian population. "We stop people on their way home and say, 'You did this and you did that and this is wrong'," said Ahmed Fakradean, a Revolutionary Committee member. Two months ago the committees decreed an end to private property and set fire to government property records throughout the country. "People were very angry with this. They feel they have no home now," said one Libyan.

While the threat of U.S. military retaliation has shifted the population's attention away from its economic woes and again made Kaddafi a national hero, the Libyan leader still faces a considerable long-term threat from Libya's armed forces. Last year Kaddafi publicly stated his goal of eliminating the Army altogether in favor of a "People's Army." Foreigners here noted that in contrast to other years, last September's annual celebration of Kaddafi's 1969 seizure of power did not include the traditional armed forces parade.

Holding forth: *Libya's leader meets the press in a desert tent*
KATE DOURIAN—REUTER

Suicide or murder? The most decisive blow to the armed forces, however, came with the death of Col. Hassan Ishkal, a distant cousin of Kaddafi who was considered the No. 2 in Libya and the chief defender of the armed forces. Noted for his pro-Western views and his opposition to Kaddafi's costly military forays into Chad, Ishkal was rumored to have been setting himself up to challenge the Colonel. Ishkal died last November in what was described by officials as a "suicide." Sources in Libya maintain that his body was brought to Tripoli's El Khadra hospital riddled with bullets. Humiliated by Kaddafi's neglect and directly menaced by the Revolutionary Committees' ascendance, high-ranking Libyan officers are grumbling. Washington would like to fan the discontent, but to do so, it will have to learn to manipulate popular sentiment in Tripoli as skillfully as Kaddafi has done.

MICHAEL A. LERNER *in Tripoli*